

Joint Statement by FAO & WFP in Iraq on World Food Day

17 October 2022 - The world is at risk of yet another year of record hunger as the global food crisis continues to drive yet more people into worsening levels of acute food insecurity, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warn. On World Food Day (16 October), the two agencies call for urgent action to address the root causes of today's crisis as the world continues to face challenges without borders, including Iraq.

Iraq, known commonly as the “Land of Two Rivers” has been experiencing increased drought for the past two years, brought about by the rising temperatures, reduced rainfall which is the lowest in 40 years in addition to reduced water flows in Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. This led to degradation of arable land, increased water, and soil salinity, which all contribute to serious loss of livelihoods and an increased pressure on the state national budget, which imports cereals to ensure enough food, is available to the population.

“Iraq remains one of the most affected countries globally by the adverse effects of climate change. Unless mitigation and adaptation are implemented, the future may not be promising for the small holder farmers and vulnerable groups in Iraq,” said WFP Iraq Representative, Mr. Ally Raza Qureshi. “We at WFP believe that food is the path towards peace and as such, serious action must be taken immediately by the Government of Iraq and the International community to adopt climate smart food systems and long-term resilience building in order to ensure that Iraq and its people are able to navigate these testing times.”

“This year slogan for the World Food Day *Leave no one behind. Better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*, underlines the need for concerted action to ensure that everyone has access to adequate, healthy, and affordable food while maximizing environmental sustainability in particular in Iraq where climate change is disproportionately affecting the rural poor, their agricultural yields and productivity” said FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr Salah ElHajjHassan. “Each of us has a role to play in transforming food systems for the benefit of people and the planet; FAO is committed to empower the most vulnerable in Iraq, including women and youth, through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient agrifood systems. We need to act in global solidarity to ensure that no one is left behind and become climate advocates by wasting less, eating nutritious food, in particular seasonal and locally produced foods and caring for natural resources like soil and water”.

In 2021, Iraq developed a plan to increase the efficiency, inclusiveness, resilience, and inclusivity of its agri-food systems as part of the Food Systems Summit. This was done to ensure that everyone everywhere has access to enough affordable, safe, and nutritious food to lead active and healthy lives.

Twenty percent of the Iraq's workforce are engaged in the agricultural sector, which is the second largest contributor to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) after the oil sector, accounting for 5 percent of the total GDP. Thus, agriculture development is critical to allow Iraq to achieve their vision of a more diversified economy, in addition to generating employment and boosting private sector engagement. In this regard, urgent work must be undertaken on the levels of investing in research and development in an effort to make farming more technologically advanced and capable of handling adverse climate conditions and financially viable in the country, in addition to Agri-business and value chain development to increase profit margins and encourage farmers not to abandon their lands, which is not merely a detriment to their incomes, but also drives up local food costs and shortages, affecting entire communities. It is also

paramount to discuss the issue of food waste, which decreases the availability of food intended for human consumption. This has consequences for the environment, natural resources, and the overall economy.

FAO and WFP together with the Government, private sector, academia, civil society will continue working together to prioritize food security, to increase local food production and to strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable households. Immediate joint action is key to ensuring sustainable food and nutrition security while leaving no one behind.

Dr. Salah ElHajjHassan, FAO Representative, Iraq

Ally Raza Qureshi, WFP Representative, Iraq

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About FAO

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is a specialized agency that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. It aims at transforming agri-food systems, making them more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable for better production, better nutrition, better environment, and better life, leaving no one behind. FAO's goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. With over 194 Members, FAO works in over 130 countries worldwide.

About WFP

The United Nations World Food Programme is the world's largest humanitarian organization, saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disasters, and the impact of climate change.

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